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ABSTRACT

Divided into three sections, this paper explores semiotic phenomenology as a paradigm for communicology (a translation for the new French "comunicologie" and the "German Kommunikationgemeinschaft," which are used increasingly to suggest a qualitative and human signification as opposed to the quantitative and technological reference of "cybernetics," "communications," and "informatiques"). The first section discusses the origins of semiotic phenomenology in philosophy and explores the French and American versions. The second section suggests how this paradigm would function in the human and social sciences in general, while the third section discusses what this paradigm might do for the study of communication as human discourse, and elaborates on the four propositions used to define the paradigmatic status of semiotic phenomenology: (1) a discursive model of being human, (2) a human model of discourse, (3) a normative logic in communicological theory, and (4) a normative logic in communicological praxis. The paper concludes with a three-page list of references. (HOD)

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Can An American Do Semiotic Phenomenology?

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Qualitative Methods, Interpretative Methods, the Narrative Model, and similar names for paradigm approaches to research in the Human Sciences are all too familiar these days. These names mark out an apparently new shift in the currents of research practice in the discipline of communicology. This shift is supposed to be in conflict with or at least different from Quantitative Methods, Measurements Methods, the Observation Model, and like names for paradigm approaches in the Social Sciences. In my characterizations of both methodological paradigms, I use the disciplinary name Communicology and shall continue to do so throughout my analysis, because for the time being it is name whose time has not yet come. It does not yet represent a paradigm with political overtones as does "Speech Communication", or "Communications", or "Mass Communication", or "Telecommunication" or "Intercultural Communication" or any of the other "communication" we formally entitle with existence in our professional associations.

Communicology is certainly not the name of a new paradigm in Kuhn's (1970) sense of the term, nor is it yet the mark of a "community of interpretation" in Peirce's (1960, 1976) sense. However, we might take note that in the "international" context of our discipline the English "communicology" is an appropriate translation for the new French "comunicologie" and the German "Kommunikationgemeinschaft" which are used increasingly to suggest a qualitative and human signification as opposed to the quantitative and technological reference of "cybernetics", "communications", and "informatiques". In short,

communicology is a neologism that should afford us all a certain amount of academic detachment in my discussion of pardigmatic theory and method, since nobody owns it, yet! Put more bluntly, I am not going to praise or balme anyone by name, at least not any more than I have done already by the vague hint that I see an implied difference between between the use of 'Human Science' as opposed to 'Social Science'. That general difference aside, I propose to focus on three items for discussion. First, an account of "semiotic phenomenology" as a paradigm for communicology which has its origins in the mother of all disciplines, Philosophy. Second, a suggestion of how this paradigm would function in the Human and Social Sciences in general. And third, I want to suggest what this paradigm might do for the study of communication as human discourse.

SEMIOTIC PHENOMENOLOGY AS A PARADIGM

If we are to speak of 'semiotic phenomenology' as a paradigm, we must begin with the recognition that there is both an American and a French origin. The American version is virtually unknown outside of historical philosophy (Alexander, 1972; Lanigan 1986). The French version is badly misconstrued by interpreters and commentators in the United States. A recent example is Poole, Siebold, & McPhee (1985) where human groups are hypostatized as structural <u>channels</u> of communication. A correct understanding of the human group as a <u>medium</u> of

communication has long been available in the work of McFeat (1974). See Lyons (1977, 1, p. 68) for a complete discussion of the communication theory distinction betwen channel and medium and its empirical research consequence. First, a word about the French version.

In France, there has been a debate for several decades between the phenomenologists who argue for the speaking subject as the key to understanding human communication as parole and the structuralists who advocate understanding communication as langue through the agency of the speech community. This debate between the phenomenologists and structuralists involved both of them with semiology and a second generation of scholars argued the resulting issues, especially in literature, anthropology, history, and sociology, under the respective names of hermeneuticists or hermeneutic phenomenologists and post-structuralists (Descombes, 1980, p. 81).

At the moment, we are witnessing the return to semiology and its assimilation by both sides. For example, we see in the work of A. J. Greimas a semiotic hermeneutic-phenomenology and in the work of Jacques Derrida a semiotic post-structuralism. We do not need to dwell on the specifics of these paradigmatic trends, except to acknowledge that they are grounded in more than a century of theoretical and applied communication research. Even a cursory reading of the linguists Ferdinand de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, Louis Hjelmslev (1961), Emile Benveniste, and John Lyons (1977) confirms this fact. The same is true for the philosophers of the same period who are fascinated with

communication. Here, I refer especially to the early work by Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger in Germany and to Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty in France.

In more recent work, we are all familiar with the schools of thought represented in Germany by Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, and Karl-Otto Apel and in France by Roland Barthes (1977, 1978), Michel Foucault (1982), Pierre Bourdieu (1977), and Jean Baudrillard (1981). Nor, should we forget the special insights about human discourse that come from Freud and his French critic, Jacques Lacan. In my view, it is regretable that American scholars have not taken better advantage of this overall rich resource of European thought. All too frequently, I believe, communicologists have assumed incorrectly that paradigmatic strength comes by counter-distinction to the theory of other disciplines. Researchers are much to facile at adopting their methodologies in a theoretical vacuum. As a matter of focus, let me suggest that what communicology as a discipline borrows from phenomenology is the methodology of description and empirical constitution. What is fails to borrow is the normative logic of the theory. The result is atheoretical description of the worst sort: subjective introspection--ironically the very thing that Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, attacked in the Nineteenth Century as the cause of a crisis in science. What communicology as a discipline borrows from structuralism is the methodology of deconstruction and empirical description. What it fails to appropriate is the logic model of its concomitant theory. Again, the

result is atheoretical description in the worst context: individual behavior claimed as social practice--ironically as well, this so-called "naturalistic" method is anything but a model of physical nature; it is properly the cultural model of empirical human discourse. Recall that the Poole, Siebold & McPhee (1985) article illustrates this confusion of the nature and culture distinction.

Let me now turn briefly to the less well known American tradition in semiotic phenomenology. The Nineteenth Century contributions of John Dewey, William James, George Herbert Mead are generally familiar at least in the applied traditions that survive them, viz., progressive public education and political democracy from Dewey, interpersonal and humanistic psychology from James, and Mead's symbolic interaction model in sociology and psychology. What is little appreciated or commented upon (with the exception of William James) is the great theoretical debt that the movement of American Pragmaticism owes to Charles Sanders Peirce. His systematic presentation in eight volumes of semiotics and phenomenology (later called phaneroscopy) and his four volumes on mathematical logic make him the American pioneer in the study of human thought, language, and communication. If there is an American father of communicology, it is C. S. Peirce (Eco, 1979, 1984). With the current republication of his collected works in a chronological edition, we are only now becoming aware of his importance to our discipline for theory construction. Let me now turn to my second point, namely, the application of semiotic phenomenology as a theoretical

paradigm per se.

THE PARADIGM AS DEFINING EXEMPLAR

The title of this paper in the form of a research question is actually the expression of a research problematic. The problematic bears on the human sciences in general, and on the discipline of communicology in particular. This problematic has several paradigmatic and syntagmatic characteristics: (1) The word "can" signals an orientation in research that focuses on possibility rather than probability; (2) The phrase "an American"--I mean only researchers in the United States of America who claim to represent dominant practice--signals that research judgments tend to be individual in nature. This individualism is heavily constrained by a sociocultural view of science as positive technology; (3) The verb "do" indicates this American preference for technological application that is, at least, atheoretical and, at most, prior to theory statement; (4) The phrase "semiotic phenomenology" specifies a contemporary theory and praxis approach to human communication that constrains the uncritical use of the atheoretical positive science just explicated. That is, phenomenology is the study of human conscious experience and semiotics is the study of sign systems. Phenomenology is, first, an examination of the <u>discursive models of being human</u> and, second, the examination of <u>normative logics as communicological theory</u> (Lanigan, 1977). Semiotics is, first, the examination of <u>human models of discourse</u>

and, second, the examination of normative logics as communicological praxis (Lanigan, 1972, 1984).

What I propose to explicate in my analysis is the paradigmatic consequence of answering the research question posed, viz., "Can an American do semiotic phenomenology?". I am concerned in particular with the process of legitimation that is the illusion of positive practice, irregardless of one's theoretical commitments or preferences. In a word, I want to explore the dangers of the very notion of a paradigm so expressed. Or, to describe it in a more subtle, but accurate, way, I am concerned to step outside of Kuhn's (1970) positive notion of being confronted with either paradigm evolution or revolution, both of which seem to be no more than paradigm legitimation when Kuhn's theory is explicated by its own normative criteria.

By way of briefly illustrating what I mean, consider this. You answer the question I pose in this paper with a simple "yes" or an equally comforting "no". In either case, your answer legitimizes the question: (1) by granting the question its own discursive reality--it is a well formed, clear question and thereby illustrates that science has a rhetoric, (2) by acknowledging the validity of an answer as a normative, parsimonous extension of both the theory and practice embedded in the question and thereby illustrate that science has a logic--it is, as Searle (1969) would argue, a well formed speech act which entails a propositional act, along with an intentional practice (Searle, 1983), and (3) by discounting any expectation of a different form of answer, thereby

granting that science has a grammar with all its ontological anonymity. It is at least ironic, then, to note that an uncritical answer to my question enlightens us about the power of legitimized knowledge as opposed to understanding. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Foucault (1982) remind us, (1) legitimate(d) knowledge is no less than the voice of science which is no particular human, embodied person, but merely rhetoric as a representation of that voice (rhetorically, a prosopopoia), (2) legitimate(d) knowledge is no less than the judgment of science which is no particular human, embodied act, but merely logic as a representation of that act, viz., action (logically, an inference), and (3) legitimate(d) knowledge is no less than the discursive origin of science which is no particular human, embodied person, but merely the grammar (langage) as a representation of 'person', viz. the subject (grammatically, the 'subject' nomination, ascription, or predication).

In short, there are two answers to the question: "Can an American do semiotic phenomenology?" "Yes" or "No" is one such response. "Yes" and "No" is the second answer possibility. Both answers represent thematics, i.e., propositions which are a positive expression of the research norms contained in the problematic. These are the norms I just listed previously. In short form, they are Understanding versus Knowledge. The respective essential characteristics of each are (1) possibility versus probability, (2) particular versus universal [or, singular versus general], (3) praxis versus practice, and (4) conscious experience versus the experience of conscious [or, perception/expression as

theoretical versus sensation/observation as atheoretical--recalling, however, that observation is a modality of expression!]. This is to say, the four normative conditions as a system constitute a normative logic model by which any answer to the question is constrained. To express such an argument is to clearly identify my research project as a Qualitative Theory and Methodology that is concerned with Understanding, i.e., with describing, and thereby constituting the condition, relation, and consequence of human norms (hypothesis). It is not a quantitative theory and methodology that is concerned with Knowledge, i.e., with norming (i.e., 'inventing' in its technical theory construction sense) assumed constituents of representation in human action (hypostatization).

Having described the manner in which problematics constitute thematics, and, how thematics entail the normative, prescriptive coinditions for any constitution [description with ontological force], I now take up the two answers to the propositional question which I stated are possible. They are the combinatory (analogue) normative answers "Yes and No", and, the exclusionary (digital) norming answers "Yes or No". As a narrative proof of the problematics and entailed thematics, consider the legitimation of the Understanding paradigm that occurs as you pragmatically link the semantic force of "Yes and No" with "true and false", "valid and invalid", "significant and insignificant", "sense and nonsense", and "sincere and insincere". Understanding, in short, not only requires, but is a human participation in the phenomenon.

Understanding is science *in situ* and properly called 'human science'. Now consider the equally forceful legitimation of the Knowledge paradigm as you link "Yes *or* No" with "true or false", valid or invalid", significant or insignificant", "sense or nonsense", or "sincere or insincere". Knowledge, in brief, not only requires, but is science *de natura* and properly called 'natural science'.

In the preceding analysis, I explored the consequences of a "yes" answer *and* a "no" answer as a praxis condition from which I can abstract the thematic theory conditions which ground all possible answers. Explicitly stated, such an abstraction is a process of theory construction in which a differentiation by combination produces and thereby expresses a set of metatheory conditions that subsequently create substantial description of the phenomenon under investigation. In short, the constition of norms proceeds from a discovery of sufficient conditions in perception to the necessary conditions of description as expression. Put in plain language, I am arguing that a "Yes *and* No" answer entails a "because . . ." predication or ascription as a sufficient condition for perception by a person, be it as listener, reader, or viewer. Likewise, the "because . . ." entailment is a necessary condition for the person as speaker, writier, or image maker (Wilden, 1980). On *these positive* theoretical conditions, it is clear to us that the absence of the "because . . ." entailment is the required (necessary) condition for theory on the model of the natural sciences--Nature is or is not (at least, we so assume in this century). Therefore, we are confronted with the discovery

made popular by Karl Popper that theorizing about Nature is a counter-factual business. That is, hypostatizations are assumed "positive" when we fail to produce an empirical counter-example; on these negative sufficient conditions we posit knowledge, but it is a "we" that has already started from the the theoretical ground of understanding. Without wanting to labor the place of theory construction in the discussion of paradigms, I now turn to my last, third, point.

SEMIOTIC PHENOMENOLOGY AS COMMUNICOLOGY

Recall the four propositions I used to define the paradigmatic status of semiotic phenomenology. As a pradigm for theory and research, it is:

1. A discursive model of being human.
2. A human model of discourse.
3. A normative logic in communicological theory.
4. A normative logic in communicological praxis.

Propositions one and three are necessary conditions for any research which purports to depict or predict discourse as a human practice (a phrase I prefer to "behavior") of communication. Propositions two and four are sufficient conditions for the same inferences. In the context of the first proposition, Merleau-Ponty in the area of perception and Foucault in the area of expression demonstrate the empirical and eidetic

meaning of discourse as an existential and structural model of being human. Language, discourse, gesture--all social practices--are lived experiences of the person, they are not anonymous objects in Nature nor are they the constructs of the mystic forces of authority, whether sacred or secular. With regard to the third proposition, Husserl, Apel, and Greimas each explore the normative logics that are necessary to any understanding of communicological theory. Husserl tests the transforamtions of the eidetic and empirical conditions for communicative phenomena, while Apel explores such communicative transformations as they constitute disciplinary studies and institutions. Greimas is at work to separate out the transformtions in language from those in speech; with Greimas we hear the voice of narrative, but we do not yet understand who is speaking.

Turning to the second and fourth propositions, it is the human models of discourse that occupy Jürgen Ruesch, Jakobson, and Benveniste. Discounting the cybernetic analogy of Weiner and the mathematical analogy of Shannon and Weaver, Ruesch studies the intentional practices of persons as individuals, as participants in group culture, and their role in the institution of social organization. Jakobson begins with the comparative structure of languages and generalizes to folktales and then to all semiotic practice as a logical necessity, whether formalized as a logic, mathematic, or linguistic phenomenon. Jakobson's discovery of the distinctive features in human language as an eidetic condition of empirical existence is, perhaps, the most significant

discovery in the Twentieth Century with regard to our understanding of the nature and function of human discourse.

Benveniste (1971; 1973) traces the history of langauge as a record of human practice; in that record he discovers the metacommunication feature of all human discourse. These normative logics in communication theory are subsequently the focus of study by Habermas and Luhmann. Habermas explores the universal pragmatic feature of speech as a communicative action in the lifeworld of the person; Luhmann explores the macrostructures of society and culture which contain the possibilities of the such a lifeworld. With the insights of Jean Baudrillard, we enter the world of mediated and exchanged human reality. The dialectic between a choice of context and a context of choice becomes the political economy of the lifeworld. In short, normative logics in practice come to constitute the theory of communication as lived; mediation is praxis.

I close my analysis now, not with a theoretical summary or a master propositon, but with some mediated human discourse. In the film Tender Mercies (1983), Robert Duvall plays the part of a down and out alcoholic country-western songwriter and singer named Mac Sledge. As Mac Sledge comes out of the feed store in small Texas town, a woman on the sidewalk--a stranger--asks him: "Mister, did you use' to be Mac Sledge?" Mac Sledge answers: "Yes, I was him." We, here, stand on the same sidewalk as Mac Sledge. Someday a stranger will ask us, "Mister did you use' to be a communicologist?" Because our lifeworld will come

to displace our professional paradigm, we will be able to answer: "Yes, I <u>was</u> one."

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